To,
The Member Secretary & Members,
Expert Appraisal Committee (Thermal Power)
Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change


Sir/Madam,

The above mentioned proposal was discussed in the 8th meeting of the Reconstituted EAC on EIA of thermal power projects. The minutes of the said meeting shows that the project proponent i.e M/s Welspun Energy Pvt Ltd has applied for amendment of the Environment Clearance dated 21.08.2014 in pursuance of the directions passed by the National Green Tribunal in judgment dated 21.12.2016 in Appeal No. 79 of 2014 and judgment dated 1.05.2017 in Review Application No. 4 of 2017. The project proponent is misleading the EAC by misinterpreting and misquoting the judgments passed by the Hon’ble Tribunal. It is therefore important to bring to your kind notice the following facts before arriving at any decision with respect to the said project proposal.

(1) Judgment dated 21.12.2016 in Appeal No. 79 of 2014:

The Environment Clearance of the said project was challenged in appeal No. 79 of 2014 (Debadityo Sinha & Ors V/s Union of India & Ors) before the Principal bench of NGT at New Delhi. The Hon’ble Tribunal vide judgment dated 21.12.2016 quashed the entire EC holding that “entire process of consideration of EC is found tainted so as to render it less credit worthy than the one expected by law”.

The operative part of the judgment is as follows:

“Para 60: EC Regulations, 2006 lay down a chain of interconnected processes to make a complete mechanism required to assess the potential impacts of the project or activities on the environment made of several components. Every piece of information/data furnished and/or collected at every stage of the process is expected to be wholesome free from any twist or turn in order to truly aid the correct appraisal of the potential impacts of the project. This expectation of law is evident from the checks and balances provided in EC Regulations, 2006.

Para 61: Cumulatively, therefore, the entire process of consideration and appraisal of the proposal to grant EC is found tainted so as to render it less credit worthy than the one expected by law and as such makes it even more difficult to suggest the safeguards in order to render the project sustainable one. We, therefore, answer the question raised herein above negatively. In our opinion, it is advisable to go through the entire process of EC afresh before green signal is given to the project.
We, therefore, allow this Appeal and pass the following directions:

1. **The Appeal is allowed and EC dated 21-08-2014 is set aside.**
2. **Respondent no. 4 shall not carry out any developmental work at the project site.**
3. **The respondent no. 4 shall restore the area to its original condition.**
4. Work of restoration is stayed for a period of two months.

Para 62. In view of the above directions Appeal No. 79 of 2014 stands disposed of. M.A. Nos. 694 of 2014 and 511 of 2015 also stand disposed of.”

It is submitted that the EC was quashed based on the following observations made by the Hon’ble bench of NGT:

1. Misleading description of nature of land as “barren”,
2. Substantial non-compliance of scoping process,
3. Involvement of forests for the project not revealed,
4. Lack of assessment of crucial issues in EIA such as impact on forests, wildlife, competitive use of water from river Ganga and upper khajuri reservoir and its cumulative impact on upstream and downstream,
5. Non application of mind by the EAC,
6. Violation of the requirement of free and fair public hearing preventing affected people from raising their concerns.

The decision of the Hon’ble Tribunal is based on the fact that the project was granted EC against the principles of environment protection and in disregard of the substantial and mandatory provisions of the EIA Notification, 2006 stipulated under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

(2) **Judgment dated 01.05.2017 in Review Application No. 2 of 2017, 4 of 2017 and 6 of 2017:**

Three review applications numbered (RA No. 2 of 2017/RA No. 4 of 2017/RA No. 6 of 2017) were filed by the MoEFCC, M/s Welspun and State of UP respectively against the judgment dated 21.12.2016 seeking review/modification of the judgement and setting aside of the cancellation of the EC till the shortcomings as pointed out by this Hon’ble Tribunal are not rectified and the safeguards and mitigating measures are not added in the existing EC in view of the observations of the judgement and pursuant to which the EC be rendered operational.

The said reviews came to be dismissed by the Hon’ble tribunal on 1st May 2017 holding that the said review application hold no merit and fall within the **Appellate Jurisdiction in contradistinction to Review Jurisdiction.** However, it provided a clarification that the project proponent is at liberty to approach the MoEF&CC or any other competent authority for processing of the applications for grant of EC upon making up for/rectifying the defects and deficiencies pointed out in the judgement and the authorities concerned to process the same in accordance with law while strictly adhering to the content of the judgment.
(3) Misinterpretation of the judgments and application for amendment of the EC contrary to the directions passed by the NGT:

It is submitted that the said judgment of the Hon’ble Tribunal has been misinterpreted by the project proponent as per its convenience. The Hon’ble Tribunal has not reviewed/modified or altered its original judgment dated 21.12.2016 and the Environment Clearance of the project still stands quashed as per law. Therefore, no amendment of a quashed EC could be applied for by the project proponent. The language of the Hon’ble Tribunal is clear in stating that the project proponent can approach the MoEFCC for processing of the applications for grant of EC upon rectifying the defects pointed out in the judgment.

The judgment has pointed out that the entire process of the EC is tainted and therefore it has stated that the entire process of EC should be undertaken afresh before green signal is given to the project. The clear understanding of both the judgements is that the project proponent can reapply afresh for the Environment Clearance after rectification of the defects and deficiencies pointed out in the judgement. The project proponent has clearly not understood the correct interpretation of the judgment and instead of re-applying the EC it has applied for amendment of the quashed EC.

(4) Observations made by the Hon’ble Tribunal has been misquoted: The project proponent is trying to mislead the EAC.

All the information/facts/documents provided by the project proponent from point no (vi) to (xvii) in minutes were already produced before the Hon’ble Tribunal and the same were found to be highly questionable. The project proponent cannot rely upon the same documents which have been perused and rejected by the Hon’ble Tribunal. The project proponent based on its limited understanding has done a scattered reading of the judgment and is trying to showcase as if the observations were made in its favour. The following observations of the Hon’ble Tribunal are required to be carefully looked at:

1. **Point no v and vi:**

   v. In the updated form-1 submitted to MoEF&CC on 17.6.2017 and required information about forest land involved has been provided. There is a forest involvement of 5.8162 ha for laying of pipeline and 2.5419 ha for laying of approach road. Application for Stage-I forest Clearance has been submitted vide proposal no.FP/UP/THE/14236/2015.

   vi. The survey for land schedule involved in railway siding and transmission line shall be carried out at later stage considering the short construction period involved in these activities. However, requirement of forest land if any will be applied for Forest Clearance as per the process. A small patches of lands 1.01 ha (gatta no.180) and 0.49 ha (gatta no.216ja) with in the plant area have been classified as Jhari or revenue forest. Necessary permission will be taken from the forest dept. for developing greenbelt in the area. Regional Office, MoEF&CC vide letter dated 11.10.2013 state that these two gatta lands are recorded as Jhari in revenue records and are in the ownership of State
Govt. If these lands are to be used for non-forest purpose, the permission under FCA is essential.

Our Submission:

The Hon’ble Tribunal observed that the project proponent provided a misleading description of the land and did not reveal the involvement of forests lands which were required for approach road, rail line, water line and transmission line, all of which would pass through the surrounding forest land. The Hon’ble Tribunal has also observed presence of forests within the plant boundary. The consideration of the Hon’ble Tribunal was not limited to obtaining Forests Clearance only but was on the detailed assessment of the impacts of the project on forests and wildlife in the EIA report. Please note the Court’s observations:

“Para 36: Barren land from its very description conveys a meaning that it is unfertile not supportive of any vegetation. Definition of barren land in “Wasteland Atlas of India” describes it as: The rock exposures of varying lithology often barren and devoid of soil and vegetation cover. Thus absence of any vegetation is hallmark of a barren land. Description of the land for the project as a ‘barren land’ is therefore, a misleading description.

Para 39: In this backdrop the contentions raised by the appellants that there was deliberate concealment of forest land by the appellants in the present case gains significance.

Para 48: Undoubtedly, the approach road, rail line and water line have to pass through forest lands, and these being material components of the project, the Project Proponent ought to have revealed the involvement of the forest land, in Form-1 filed for the purposes of getting EC.

Para 50: Learned Counsel appearing on behalf of the appellants further brought to our notice that not only the project involves use of forest land for coal transportation, water pipeline but there is no discussion in the EIA report regarding the potential impact of the fragmentation of the forest and disturbance of wildlife due to the passing of the railway line for coal transportation, construction of transmission line, water pipeline and approach road. From the facts noticed herein above, it is evident that the project is surrounded by forest and involves ‘Parti Bhumi’ (fallow land) thereby signifying least anthropogenic activity at or around the project site and, thus the issue of wildlife in the area deserves serious consideration.”

The project proponent is relying upon the letter of Regional Office, MoEF&CC dated 11.10.2013 which refers to a site inspection report of 19.11.2012 which were already perused by the Hon’ble tribunal and the objections of the appellant with respect to the said report was acknowledged by the Tribunal. After examining the same, the Hon’ble
Tribunal held that there is no collection of ground data in relation to forest density inspected by site inspection team.

“Para 46. Poking holes in this report, the Appellants pointed out that the report is signed only by two officials namely: Dy. Conservator of Forest (Central) and Chief Conservator of Forest (Central) almost a year after and not by all the members of the team.

Para 47. It is further pointed out that Mr. S. N. Mishra, DFO, Mirzapur Forest Division who was the member of the site inspection team addressed a letter dated 16-08-2013 (page no.2051) to the Chief Conservator of Forest (Central), MoEF making a statement that the project site has 50% of forest like area (page no. 2052). However, there is also a communication dated 13-09-2013 written by the same DFO Mirzapur to the CCF Central, MoEF with reference to list of forest like area prepared by District Level Committee mentioning that no land from the project area has been identified as forest like area. Pertinently, we do not find any collection of ground data in relation to forest density in the area inspected by site inspection team. This leaves us in wilderness of assumptions and presumptions with no categorical answer as to the nature of the area based on ground data collection.”

It is also important to bring to your notice that in the year 2015, the project proponent in order to show that there are no forests existing within and around the plant area cleared all the vegetation cover. This fact was brought to the notice of the Hon’ble Tribunal by way of M.A No. 511 of 2015. The appellants had also filed the photographs of the rampant tree felling and clearing of forests by the project proponent. In the judgment dated 21/12/2016, the Hon’ble Tribunal has also directed for restoration of the area to its original condition. Thus, it is important that the committee should also consider the existence of forests in the project site through historical satellite imageries.

2. Point no xiii:


Our Submission:

The Hon’ble Tribunal has made clear findings that except mentioning the change of location of the project from Ghazipur to Mirzapur, there has been no reference to revised Form I dated 31.03.2011 anywhere in the documents nor the information provided in the revised Form I formed the basis for grant of TOR. The Hon’ble Tribunal has further observed that the consideration of change of location and the TOR was based on “Basic Information Form” which cannot substitute the requirement of Form I which is a detailed and legally binding document based on which the TOR’s are prescribed in accordance with law stipulated under the EIA Notification, 2006.

The project proponent has misquoted the observation of the Hon’ble Tribunal by wrongfully stating that the judgment has noted the receipt of form I dated 31.03.2011. The Hon’ble Tribunal has repeatedly stated in
the judgment that the Form I dated 31.03.2011 has not found reference in any of the documents. The observation made by the Hon’ble Tribunal is very clear as it specifically states that there is a reference to the “communication” made by the respondent no. 4 at page 11 of the Note sheet wherein the Respondent No. 4 has stated that the said revised Form I has been circulated amongst all EAC members and member secretary through “E-mail dated 31.03.2011”. The finding of the Hon’ble Tribunal is, that there is a reference to the communication which alleges submission of revised Form I but no reference to the revised Form I. Please note the Court’s observations.

“Para 28: We have perused the Note sheet pages 1 to 11. At page 11 a reference is found made to the communication received from respondent no.4 in respect of the present appeal and passing on the information that the appellants could not access revised Form-I from MoEF record and the respondent no.4-company having already submitted revised Form-I and circulated it amongst all EAC Members and Member Secretary through E-mail dated 31st March, 2011. Dr. M. Ramesh appeared to have made endorsement on the said Note sheet for checking the records for the same and nothing more. However, our scrutiny has not revealed any reference to revised Form-I dated 31st March, 2011 in the said Note sheet except one on page 11 as disclosed herein above and placing of the proposal of respondent no.4 for setting up of thermal power plant at Village Dadri Khurd, Teshil Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh in 24th meeting of EAC held on May 2nd and 3rd, 2011 for determination of ToRs at page 2 of the said Note sheet dated 10th June, 2011.

“Para 30: Nowhere in the minutes of the 22nd and 24th EAC meeting held on April 4th and 5th, 2011 and May 2nd and 3rd, 2011 respectively we find reference to revised Form-I dated 31st March, 2011 except the fact that it referred to thermal power project at Village Dadri Khurd, Teshil Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh.”

3. Point no xi and x:

xi. There are schedule-1 species present in the study area. There are two endangered flora, five endangered amphibians and reptiles, six endangered avifauna and nine endangered mammals.

x. Biodiversity conservation and management plan has been prepared and submitted. The same has been approved by the Chief Conservator of Forests, Lucknow vide dated 05.10.2014.

Our Submission:

The project proponent is misleading the EAC by providing the same biodiversity conservation and management plan which was examined by the Hon’ble Tribunal and the same was not found to be in order. Further this plan was found to be questionable as in the said plan, it has been
categorically stated that “this survey needs to be carried out with the wildlife experts and the State Authority, Department to identify the areas or forest need all the conservation and management interventions which are highly crucial.”

Please note the Court’s observations:

**Para 50:** Respondent no. 4 in its reply referred to the minutes of the 13th meeting dated 25th March, 2015 and 26th March, 2014 wherein the biodiversity and conservation plan prepared by the consultant of the project proponent was found to be forwarded to the MoEF and to the Expert Member from Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun and approved by the MoEF thereafter as well as by the Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife).

Learned Counsel appearing on behalf of the appellants further brought to our notice that not only the project involves use of forest land for coal transportation, water pipeline but there is no discussion in the EIA report regarding the potential impact of the fragmentation of the forest and disturbance of wildlife due to the passing of the railway line for coal transportation, construction of transmission line, water pipeline and approach road. From the facts noticed herein above, it is evident that the project is surrounded by forest and involves ‘Parti Bhumi’ (fallow land) thereby signifying least anthropogenic activity at or around the project site and, thus the issue of wildlife in the area deserves serious consideration. EIA report (page 668) and the table provided therein (Page 669, 675) make mention of having not noticed any endangered species within the area of project site and the area lying in 10 km of the radius therefrom. However, the appellants pointed out to the response received by them to the RTI query dated 27th August, 2013 (page 161, 162) providing the list of Schedule I species- Sloth Bear, Chinkara, Black Buck, Bengal Monitor, Peafowl, crocodile (Magar) etc. within the project site and 10 km radius area. The project proponent relied upon the bio-diversity assessment and conservation plan and submitted that the EAC in its meeting dated 23rd March, 2014 had found the site report/plan in order. It has been pointed out that the site plan was prepared after the EIA report and public hearing and no study was undertaken to assess the impact of the project and its ancillary activity like coal transportation, water pipeline, approach road, ash ponds and such other impacts on the wildlife in the region. Para 4.3.1.3 (page 1058) of the report adds credence to this contention in following terms: “this survey needs to be carried out with the wildlife experts and the State Authority, Department to identify the areas or forest need all the conservation and management interventions which are highly crucial.” Facts revealed before us do not show that any member of the EAC or Expert member of WII conducted any site visit of the project to assess the gravity of exception taken to the project upon the
issues raised in relation to the forest and wildlife. Appraisal of the project in this regard, therefore, becomes questionable.

4. **Point no xi:**

Water for the project will not directly be sourced from Upper Khajuri Dam. Water from Ganga river (at 17 km from the site) via pipelines will be stored in Upper Khajuri dam and subsequently used. Clearance from UP govt. and approval from CWC had been obtained for drawl of water from river Ganges and to use upper Khajuri dam as storage for lean period. UP govt reviewed and confirmed the suitability of upper Khajuri dam considering its live storage, their irrigation requirement and plant’s storage for five months. The water drawn at intake point at Ganga river will be desilted in a desiltation plant and the treated water will be pumped to Upper Khajuri dam to maintain the water quality of Upper Khajuri dam.

**Our Submission:**

The argument before the Hon’ble Tribunal was that Upper Khajuri reservoir is a rain fed reservoir and transportation of 36 MCM of contaminated Ganga water and storing the same in the said reservoir would drastically impact the water consumption needs of people and wildlife. The Hon’ble Tribunal has well considered the said argument and has acknowledged that the competitive use of water and its cumulative impact both upstream and downstream has not been discussed in the EIA report. Please note the Court’s observations:

“Para 53: Learned Counsel appearing for the appellants submitted that transporting the massive quantity of Gangetic untreated/contaminated water to the rain fed upper Khajuri reservoir is bound to change the water quality of upper Khajuri reservoir and consequently have impact on the people downstream using the water for human needs. It is further submitted that water withdrawal of 36,000,000,000 litres annually would undoubtedly affect the ecological flow of Ganga and severely affect the Gangetic Biodiversity including Gangetic Dolphins found in Mirzapur stretch; and it is wrongly presumed that water withdrawal during monsoon from Ganga would leave no impact on Gangetic environment when there is a record of decline in rainfall in past year with no sufficient water in river in monsoons vide statistical data of rainfall in District Mirzapur annexure A-28 (page 2058). According to Learned Counsel appearing for the appellants both competitive use of water from river Ganga and upper khajuri reservoir and its cumulative impact on upstream and downstream have not been discussed in the EIA report. We do find substance in the submission made.”

5. **Point no xii:**

Company had already made commitments to BHU for installation of ESP with 99.99% efficiency, comply with conditions stipulated by CWC on water
withdrawal, ash utilisation plan and operate ETP. Company also commits to adhere to latest environmental norms published by MoEF in 2015.

**Our Submission:**

The said commitments were part of the meeting held between the company and BHU staff on 8th and 10th March, 2014. The meetings were found to be questionable by the Tribunal. At para 52 the Hon’ble Tribunal has raised doubts over these meetings. However, the project proponent is again relying upon the same meeting to mislead the EAC.

**Para 52:** It is further revealed that BHU desired to be part of environmental and social management review during the operational phase of the project and the project proponent should submit six monthly compliance report along with online data as per EC condition to the University along with other stakeholders. Significantly, the minutes of meeting do not disclose what exactly the discussions were in the meeting for thrashing out technical issues involved in the major topics purportedly discussed. The EAC also did a lip service to the process of appraisal by merely recording its nod to the presentation made by the project proponent in following terms.”

“6. The pp has submitted point wise response to BHU vide their letter dated 29th January, 2014 reg. The adverse impacts on the residents of Rajiv Gandhi South Campus due to the project. The same were presented before the Committee. The PP held meetings with BHU on 08.03.2014 and 10.03.2014 and detailed discussions were held on all the issues and provided satisfactory replies. The issues raised by the NGO, Vindhya Environmental Society in their letter to BHU were also discussed in the said meetings in detail. The Minutes of the said meeting were also submitted before the Committee. As desired by BHU, the commitments regarding installation and operation of ESP (with 99.9% efficiency) and ETP, complying with all conditions stipulated by CWC on water withdrawal and complying with proposed ash utilization plan shall be submitted to BHU. The committee recommended that the environmental cell of the PP shall also work in close coordination with BHU”

To compound this issue further the appellants have pointed out that the persons who raised their concerns did not participate in the meeting nor they authorize any person to hold the meeting on their behalf; and Professor Dr. Vijay Kishna who is shown to have attended the meeting held on 8th and 10th March, 2014 in the minutes annexure R-26 (page 1183) asserted vide email dated 23rd April, 2014 that the said meetings were not authorized by Banaras Hindu University and he participated in his personal capacity (page 2061) annexure45 R-30; and this fact was brought to the notice of Secretary, MoEF by appellants no. 3 vide email dated 25th April, 2014 annexure R-31. It was therefore, incumbent upon the MoEF to have thoughtfully considered the relevant record and sought clarification from EAC before proceeding to grant the EC. Nothing of this sort is done in the present case.”
6. **Point no xiv:**

As per the Directorate of Geology and Mining, UP, no listed mineable mineral is found in the project area including Kaimur sandstone.

**Our Submission:**

The Hon'ble Tribunal has dealt with this issue at para 55 of the judgment and after perusal of the coloured map at R-58, has rightly concluded that the project area is located on Kaimur sandstone area, an important mineral reserve. **Thus, the project proponent is misleading the EAC by relying on the same fact which has been found to be factually wrong by the Hon'ble Tribunal.**

“**Para 54:** It is further pointed out that the Project Proponent revealed in Form-1 dated 03-12-2011 (entry serial no. 10, page no. 110) that the area in question does not fall in any important high quality or scarce resources zone (ground water resource, surface resource, forestry, agriculture, fishery, tourism and minerals), and the EIA report (page no. 633 and 634) disclosed that the project site does not fall in any economically viable zone as per Regional GSI map.

**Para 55:** The Appellants further points out that the respondent no. 4 in its reply (page no. 342) made reference to the Geological and Mineral Map of District Mirzapur annexure R-47 to state that the District Mirzapur has presence of Alluvium rather than Kaimur sand stone. Coloured map produced at annexure R-58 (page no. 2924) shows that the project area is adjacent to Marihan identified as a Kaimur sand stone area which is an important mineral resource.”

7. **Point no xv, xvi and xvii**

xv Public hearing was conducted under the presence of the district magistrate, ADM and other senior officials of Govt. department. There were no police complaints/FIR registered with the local police station at Mirzapur for any illegal activity, use of force or there to any local who attended the public hearing.

xvi The project is proposed in backward area which is very close to Naxal-affected districts of U.P. i.e. Marihan and Sonbhadra. It was common practice in Mirzapur area for locals to carry arms with them.

xvii UPPCB date 12.4.2017 has certified that the public hearing was conducted in complete free and fair manner.

**Our Submission:**

The Hon’ble tribunal has held that the public hearing was not free and fair since the video records presence of armed men which prevented the people from raising concerns at the public hearing. In view of the observation the public hearing requires to be undertaken afresh. **No question of certificate from UPPCB or District Collector arises when the Tribunal has already hold the public hearing illegal.** Please note the Court’s observations:
“Para 59: However, as regards the conduct of the public hearing itself the videography has revealed the presence of gun toting men amongst the members attending the public hearing. Learned Counsel appearing on behalf of the respondent no. 4 submitted that Village Dadri Khurd being situated in backward Forest area, it is not unusual to find the locals moving with guns. Assuming this to be true it was necessary for policemen on duty to have dis-armed them before they entered the venue of the public hearing. Arms like guns are bound to strike fear in the hearts of men around and dominate their free will. It is, therefore, difficult to call this public hearing as a free and fairly conducted public hearing.”

(5) EAC cannot consider amendment of the quashed EC against the observations and directions passed by the NGT:

The EAC cannot entertain the application for the amendment of the quashed EC made by the project proponent since the same would run contrary to the judgments passed. The Hon’ble Tribunal has not suspended the EC not modified or altered its original judgment. Unless the cancellation of EC is set aside or made operational or valid, no amendment of the EC which has been rendered illegal and invalid could be sought.

The project proponent is required to submit a new application (Form –I) and Pre-Feasibility Report treating it as a fresh project proposal and is required to undergo all the necessary stages under EIA Notification, 2006 which would require identification of alternative site, determination of TOR’s by EAC based on its own merits. The amendment of a quashed EC in bits and pieces based on the scattered reading of the judgment without following the entire process afresh would be against the judgment dated 21.12.2016 and 1.05.2017 of the Hon’ble Tribunal and serious disregard of law.

We request you to provide us an opportunity to clarify the facts and situation of the case in more detail through a personal representation before the EAC/MOEFCC.

Thanking you,

Parul Gupta (Advocate)
Counsel for Petitioners/Appellants in Appeal no 79/2014

Mobile: +91-9891656928
Email: parul.lawyer@gmail.com

Copy Marked to:
1. Minister, Environment Forest & Climate Change; Chairman-NBWL
2. Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change; Member-NBWL
3. Divisional Commissioner- Mirzapur (Uttar Pradesh)
4. District Magistrate- District Mirzapur (Uttar Pradesh)
5. Chairman, Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board
6. PCCF, CCF-Mirzapur, DFO-Mirzapur, Forest & Wildlife Department-Uttar Pradesh
7. Director General of Forests & Special Secretary, MoEF&CC; Member-NBWL
8. Director, WII; Member-NBWL
9. Debadityo Sinha, Petitioner in NGT Appeal No. 79/2014